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NEWS RELEASE

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DROUGHT PERSISTS DESPITE RECENT RAINFALL

New Web site allows citizens to report drought impacts

FRANKFORT, Ky. (July 6, 2007) -- Scattered showers and thunderstorms in the last three weeks have brought beneficial rainfall to most of Kentucky, but have not eliminated the drought conditions over most of the state, according to state environmental officials.

"Hydrologic drought develops slowly when rainfall deficits persist for extended periods of time," said Bill Caldwell of the Kentucky Division of Water. "If we continue to receive frequent, widely scattered rainfall through July, it could prevent further deepening of the drought and significantly improve agricultural drought conditions."

Hydrologic drought refers to the impact that lack of precipitation has on stream flows, lake and reservoir levels and ground water levels. Agricultural drought refers to the effect of precipitation deficits on crops.

Since June 15, 3 to 5 inches of rain have fallen in the Western climatic division, 2.5 to 4 inches in the Central and Bluegrass climatic divisions, and .5 to 3 inches in the Eastern climatic division. (A map of the climatic division follows this news release.) A small portion of southern Kentucky has developed extreme drought conditions.

There have been no reported shortages at water supply intakes in Kentucky. But the extended periods of hot, dry weather this summer have led to high water usage that has at times exceeded water treatment and distribution capabilities in some localities. That threat will continue, said Caldwell.

"The drought is still with us and there is a long summer season ahead," he said. "But most water shortage situations can be averted if water users practice the conservation measures called for by their local water suppliers or local government."

The public now has the opportunity to actively participate in drought tracking through a new Web site maintained by the Kentucky Climate Center at Western Kentucky University. The Weather and Climate Forum at <http://forums.kymesonet.org/> allows individuals to report impacts of drought in their communities. The information will be used to learn more about the nature of drought, regional vulnerabilities to drought and how to better prepare for future droughts.

Drought information and updates are available at the Division of Water's Drought Monitoring Center website at <http://www.water.ky.gov/wateruse/drought/>.

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